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HIGH GRADE COTTON

- ★ Why it's needed and
 - ★ How to get it
-

VJ still requires a large amount of high-grade cotton.

High-grade cotton production has decreased.

Farmers get premium prices for high-grade cotton.

High-grade cotton means bigger exports in postwar trade.

In a nutshell: Back in 1928 and again in 1934, nearly half of our cotton graded Strict Middling or better. More than 70 percent graded Middling or better. Last year, only about 4 percent was Strict Middling or better, and 35 percent Middling or better. There are reasons for this, such as labor shortage and price, but county agents know what low-grade cotton means.

The demand for high-grade cotton did not end with VE-day. Victory in Europe only served to emphasize the need for continued production of higher grades of cotton to make total victory possible. Until Japan is conquered, high-grade cotton for war purposes is still a number one demand. Cotton is used for most of the uniforms in the Pacific theater of war.

The U. S. Department of Agriculture, the National Cotton Council, and the State extension services, encouraged by the War Department, are cooperating once more in a national educational program to urge picking, handling and ginning the 1945 cotton crop in such a way that a higher percentage of the better grades will be produced.

Cotton still remains the world's most important fiber crop--the South's main money crop and one of this country's long-time export crops.

Quality in cotton is determined largely by its staple length and grade. Staple length is determined largely by the variety planted and the area of production. Grade is determined largely by the manner in which the crop is handled at harvesttime in picking, ginning and storage and the way insects are controlled.

Objectives will be to use every possible educational device to urge farmers and pickers to:

- (1) Pick cotton dry.
- (2) Keep all trash out.
- (3) Pick before cotton is damaged by weather.
- (4) Keep good cotton separate from poor cotton. Urge ginners to adopt the latest ginning methods which protect the cotton grade.

Basic Copy Themes: Copy themes can make both the patriotic and the profit appeal. Last year the theme of the national material was "High-Grade Cotton Means More Supplies for War--More Money for You." This year the theme suggested nationally will be aimed more at the profit appeal: "Extra Care, Extra Cash"--picking and handling cotton to get high grade.

Available Materials: The need for high-grade cotton and methods of producing it will be stressed regionally in mats and press releases. Material will be sent to farm radio program directors and farm-magazine editors. Three copies of a poster, "Extra Care, Extra Cash," will be sent direct to ginners.

Most State extension services have material, or are preparing it, on what is responsible for cotton grades and how to produce high-grade cotton.

Some Local Suggestions: County extension agents, farmer committeemen, newspapers, radio stations, farm magazines, ginners, farm and civic organizations, and others can aid in many ways in carrying out the local programs. They can make cotton displays. They can arrange for farmers who are growing high-grade cotton to tell how it is done and what it means. They can distribute leaflets and circulars to farmers explaining why we need high-grade

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cotton and the premium local markets are paying for all higher grades. The local county agricultural extension agent is responsible for the education program locally, but other agencies and groups should help.

Timing: Regional programs should reach their height just before and during cotton-picking time. Cotton harvest usually begins in early September, except in the extreme Southern regions. The heavy harvest months are September, October, and November, although cotton picking begins in the extreme South in early July and is well under way in many localities by late August.

Background: During the 1928-29 season, slightly more than 47 percent of the cotton produced in the United States was Strict Middling and better (White and Extra White). The proportion has dropped steadily since then except during the 1934-35 season when it returned almost to the 1928-29 level. During the 1942-43 season it fell to slightly more than 7 percent of the total production. The 1943-44 crop contained a little less than 15 percent, or almost double that of the previous crop year. The proportion of Strict Middling and better was only a little over 4 percent of the total crop in 1944.

The Carry-over: We had on hand at the beginning of the 1944 season 1,134,000 bales of upland Strict Middling and higher grade cotton. There were about 2,800,000 bales of Middling, about 3 million bales of Strict Low Middling and about 2 million bales of Low Middling and lower on hand.

Production: Preliminary figures in 1944 showed there were less than 500,000 bales of upland Strict Middling and higher produced, as compared with 3,700,000 bales of Middling, about 4 1/3 million bales of Strict Low Middling and over 2 million bales of Low Middling and lower.

The Supply: In 1944 the supply of upland cotton of Strict Middling and higher grades in the United States was about 1,600,000 bales. There was about 4 times that much Middling, about 4 1/2 times as much Strict Low Middling and more than twice as much Low Middling and lower.

Something must be done to improve the average grade of cotton. The figures tell the whole story. Instead of piling up low-grade cotton, we need to produce more high-grade cotton. Indications are that we will carry into next season over 2 years' requirements of low grades--Low Middling and lower.

War Uses: Most of the total cotton production in this country is being used currently to equip our fighting men.

Approximately 11,000 different items made of cotton are used by our Army and Navy, and continuation of these needs for successful prosecution of the war against Japan permits no let-up in supply. Cotton is used for all types of uniforms, including air suits. It is used also for blankets, sleeping bags, parachutes for dropping supplies by air, tents, cord in tires for military vehicles, hammocks, fishing nets, helmet linings, plane parts, self-sealing gasoline tanks for planes, life rafts, gun covers, truck tarpaulins, and munitions.

Although some low-grade cotton is used in the manufacture of certain items, most of these articles require a high grade.

The planting of a long-staple variety cotton does not necessarily mean that a good grade will be produced. Important in this grading are proper harvesting, handling and ginning. Emphasis should be placed upon this phase of cotton production as well as upon the planting.

Importance of Cotton: Cotton represented about 73 percent of the raw fibers consumed by the United States during the past year. About 2 million farms are producing the crop annually, and these farms in any one year show a great variety in the quality of production. Soils, rainfall, temperatures, varieties planted, tillage methods, insect damage, harvesting, handling and ginning method vary. Although some of these factors, in some instances, are beyond the control of the individual producer; in many instances he can do much toward getting higher grades by following the five simple steps suggested.

Insofar as grade alone is concerned, the four principal properties and characteristics of cotton are color, leaf, other foreign matter and ginning preparation. Other physical properties or characteristics are staple length, uniformity or evenness of length, fineness, strength, and maturity. In general, the more desirable a cotton is for the use that can be made of it the higher its quality.

Factors of Grade: At the beginning of the season, unpicked cotton usually is of high grade since it is bright in color and carries no great amount of leaf. If cotton is picked after frost, it may be tinged or stained yellow; and if picked and ginned with cotton which opened normally before frost, spotted or low-grade cotton results. Spots may be caused also by insects. In areas where cotton is grown on red soil, bolls falling to the ground often are soil-stained. Cotton left in the field after opening becomes darker and dull in color as a result of weather exposure, therefore is lower in grade.

Foreign Matter: Broken plant leaves of various kinds, motes, seed-coat fragments, and sometimes sand and dust also lower the grade. The less foreign matter of this kind, the higher the grade. This is especially of great concern to the spinner since there is much less waste to cotton with little or no foreign matter.

Preparation of Cotton is the term used to describe the degree of smoothness or relative nappiness of the ginned lint. Seed cotton when ginned damp or wet results in roughly ginned lint, which lowers its value one or more grades.

Price Difference: The difference in the price of high-grade cotton and low-grade cotton is too great to go unnoticed. Here is what the farmer will want to know:

The 10-market average price for Middling 15/16-inch cotton in 1944 (August through April) was 21.6 cents per pound. Strict Middling was 21.87 cents or the Middling 15/16-inch price plus a premium of 26 points. For Good Ordinary, the lowest of white grades, the price averaged 15.53 cents or a discount from Middling of 608 points. Thus on a per-hale basis, Strict Middling was worth about \$32 more than Good Ordinary.

Such a difference, plus the need for higher grade cotton, should make every cotton producer, picker and ginner conscious of quality.